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May 22, 2009

Dear Friends:

I regret that I cannot join you today for the Atomic Veterans Memorial highway dedication because of the House calendar and legislative duties in Washington, D.C., today.

I applaud our State and Local officials who have worked to get this important designation completed, and I hope everyone driving this stretch of highway will realize how important Atomic veterans are to our history. The new signage is a small way we can help tell the story of these veterans who for decades were not able to speak of their sacrifices.

Due to their efforts, our military has been equipped with tools and technology to keep our nation safe and secure all these years. Some of the things these veterans did in the line of duty include the following:

- Atomic Veterans bravely served at ground zero from the trench lines of the Nevada Test Sites;
- boarded vessels of the target fleet;
- flew through tests zones;
- tracked and sampled the explosive aftermath;
- collected debris, recording instruments, and targets;
- constructed, repaired and rebuilt test sites;
- worked to clean up and secure hazardous test sites in the Pacific; and
- patrolled ground zero at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In the years when our nation's atomic research was in its infancy, these men and women were exposed to then-untold effects on their health. At the time, our dedicated men and women in uniform were concerned only with the safety and protection of this nation. Unfortunately, radioactive exposure resulted in devastating health effects that were only apparent years later.

Because of their work and sacrifice has largely gone unnoticed, this week Senator Pat Roberts and I introduce the Atomic Veterans Service Medal Act to commission the Department of Defense to award a medal to those involved in atomic research and weapons use. The survivors of Atomic veterans would also be eligible for this medal. Senator Roberts and I have authored

this legislation in previous Congresses, and it is my hope that House and Senate leadership will choose to honor these veterans and pass our bill to authorize this long-overdue recognition.

The highway dedication today serves as a reminder to all of us who travel this way that freedom is not free. We should all be grateful for those who have contributed to and preserved our way of life.

Congratulations to everyone involved in seeing this highway designation through to completion.

May God bless you, and may God bless America.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Todd". The signature is stylized with a long horizontal stroke above the letters.

Todd Tiaht  
Member of Congress